Terre Haute - Colleges and Universities - Rose Polytechnic

I Hear the Tread of Pioneers

By John G. Biel Star Sept 9-1960

Rose Polytechnic Institute opened with its first class on March 7, 1883 with 25 students and 6 professors and instructors—with 3 professorships still unfilled. That fall, the class enlarged. It consisted of 16 freshmen, 16 sophomores and three juniors. These three juniors—Samuel S. Earley, Onzi P. Hood and Benjamin McKeen—had followed Dr. Charles O. Thompson from the Free Institute of Technology at Worcester, Massachusetts when he left there to become the first President of Rose Polytechnic Institute. These three became the first graduates of Rose—comprising the entire senior graduating class in June of 1885.

In the sophomore class was a young fellow by the name of Harry Galt Brownell. He continued in school and was a member of the second graduating class in June of 1886. He was 19 years old on his graduation, having been born at Elmhurst, Illinois August 9, 1866. After his graduation he entered the employ of the Chicago Edison Company where he remained one year. He held various other jobs and became a designer of machinery. In 1895 he was elected to the position of Principal of the Manual Training High School at Louisville, Kentucky where he remained for 8 years at which time he resigned and became associated with the University School of Louisville. During his teaching career he engaged in private consultation work, finally severing his connection with educational institutions to devote himself entirely to work as a consulting engineer. He is credited with having designed one of the first compound-wound electroplating dynamos.

During his last semester at Rose, he wrote a letter to a girl—Miss Angie E. Badger—at Northfield, Vermont. That letter has been preserved for us today to give us a "first-hand" glimpse at "college life" some 70 years ago; to give us an intimate glance at a student's appraisal of his professors, his recreational activities and some 'news" of the town of Terre Haute at the time.

THE LETTER follows:

Rose Polytechnic Institute
1874
"Terre Haute, Ind.
"Jan. 24, 1886.

"My dear Angie:

"I wrote an eight-page letter home last night and as I do not intend going to church this A. M. guess I can write you one as long. However I won't promise. Your kind letter came to hand on Thursday. Was a little disappointed at not receiving it on Wednesday as usual but supposed that bad weather had caused delay on the railroads.

I did loose all the flesh I gained during vacation and more too, I guess, the first week after my return but think I am gaining a little again. I did not work very hard but didn't feel at all well. Had almost no appetite and felt generally mean. But I have been very well for the past ten days. As to my eyes, there is no danger whatever of my becoming blind. The sight is all right—am not even near sighted. The glasses are simply to help me in my efforts to keep both eyes on the same object. You know that one of Auntie's eyes and also one of Ma's turns out whenever they read. Mine has a tendency that way but it takes an effort to turn it out or to hold it in either. I can read or write now for four hours steady and never think of my eyes troubling me, whereas before, an hour's steady work would make them smart and ache badly.

\+ + +

"**WE HAVE HAD** all sorts of winter weather the past week. The thermometer has ranged from -8 degrees to +35 degrees. It has snowed and rained and the wind has been from nearly all directions. Some of the evenings have been lovely.

"Phil Randall seems to be in great demand. It is nice to have plenty of friends who can help one to get a good start in the world. Hope I can get some good job that I will like, that will pay well. I think I could get a position here in the Polytechnic next year as laboratory assistant in Physics if I tried very hard, for Professor Blake wants one and I "stand in" in with him better than most of the class. But I don't care for the job now as much as I did last term. I want to get a position which will require me to do more or less traveling.

"I think Pa was a little mistaken when he said I had improved in looks. I have not only I look a little older and more "dressy" when I have my frock coat on than when I wear a little bob tailed affair. No, Helene did not call me "pretty" but I heard her call some Wheaton boys pretty. Miserable expression! I don't think people are quite so badly mistaken about you as you think they are and I still abide by my former decision — that you deserve all you get and more too.

\+ + +

OUR MATHEMATICS at school has been very hard—so hard that Prof. Waldo has done most of the reciting for two weeks. He very often gets stuck fast himself but not so often as we do. Have done but little in Physics lately on account of lack of apparatus. The time system is doing finely. The primary clock is doing better

Incomplete

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Emeline Fairbanks Mem. Library